

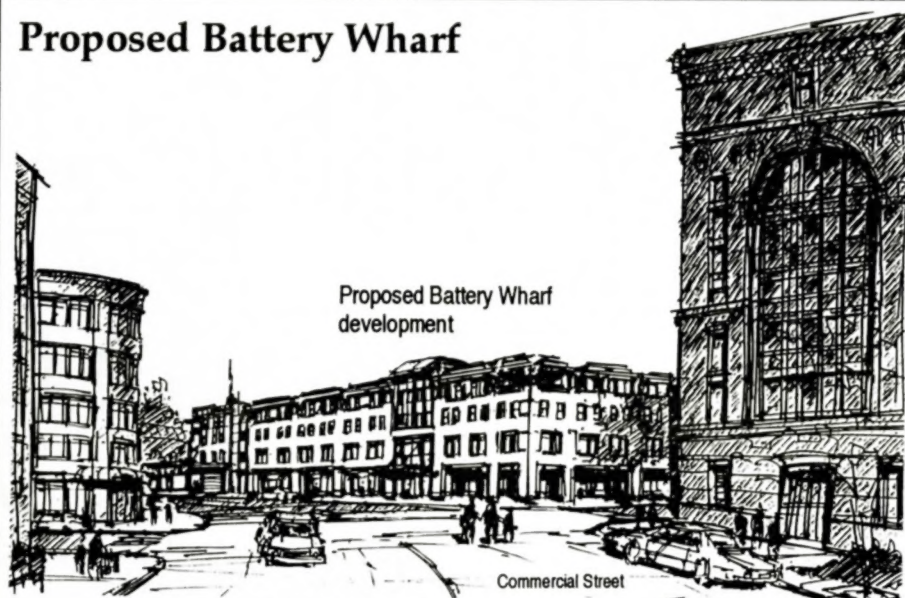
THE BOSTON INFORMER

No. 22

The newsletter for people who care about Boston

November-December 1995

Proposed Battery Wharf



Battery Wharf in the North End is in the process of being sold to The Raymond Group by the owners of Bay State Lobster. With architects CBT, they plan to build 231 rental apartments with 250 underground parking spaces on the water side of the wharf and a two-story retail building with 100 underground parking spaces adjacent to Commercial Street. The second floor would be a supermarket (rumored to be Star Market) and miscellaneous retail on the first floor, including Bay State Lobster. The Raymond Group is getting input from neighborhood groups and plans to file a Project Notification Form with the Boston Redevelopment Authority sometime in January.

Source: The Raymond Group

The new moveable high occupancy vehicle lane (HOV or carpool lane) on the Southeast Expressway between Furnace Brook Parkway and Freeport Street is already having new rules written for it. Open since Nov. 15, the HOV lane attracts only about 900 vehicles with three or more people per hour in the peak periods, according to the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD). A regular lane carries about 4,600 vehicles per hour in the peak periods.

MHD has decided to expand use of the lane by opening it to commercial vehicles carrying any number. MHD says the HOV lane has been a "tremendous success" despite use leveling off and the fact that it carries only 20 percent of the traffic of a regular lane. MHD decided to give HOVs easy access to the commercial-only Ted Williams Tunnel.

Several South Shore legislators had requested that the HOV lane be opened to two-person carpools to encourage carpools to form and to maximize use of the lane. Since use has not increased since the lane opened, some argue that the current "incentives" are not enough to get people to form three-person carpools and that allowing two-person carpools would be a useful incentive. If the lane becomes overcrowded with two-plus vehicles, the rule could be changed back to three-plus. Many point out that allowing commercial vehicles in the lane does nothing to achieve the goal of reducing single-occupancy vehicle use.

Construction of the HOV lane included converting the breakdown lanes into travel lanes to create five travel lanes in the peak direction and three in the reverse direction. The travel-time savings are estimated to be about 10 minutes.

A change in the way the MBTA is financed may be in the cards if a legislative commission's initial recommendations are adopted. With a January deadline, the commission, chaired by Rep. Frank Hynes and occasionally by EOTC Sec. James Kerasiotes, has four recommendations that could shift about \$25 million in annual costs from communities within the MBTA district to the state.

The tentative recommendations include:

■ **Shift commuter rail costs to the state and eliminate assessments.** Since commuter rail has grown and now covers about 50 percent of the state, many consider commuter rail a state program.

■ **Allow non-served communities to leave the MBTA district.** Cities and towns with no direct MBTA service would not be in the assessed MBTA district, saving 18 or 19 communities lots of money.

■ **Add a 25-cent surcharge to parking fees** that would revert to the communities to mitigate the cost of police patrols associated with a commuter lot.

■ **Increase the farebox recovery goal to equal the average of the 30 biggest U. S transit agencies.** The MBTA's current goal is for 35 percent of the operating budget to come from fares; the national average is about 42 percent. If this became a requirement and the MBTA wanted to achieve it through a fare increase and no other means, the rise in fares would probably be less than 25 percent.

Big Dig Sees Light at End of the Tunnel

After a decade into the project, the "Management Review Report" by Peterson Consulting Ltd. et al. has been completed and includes several recommendations under "Management 101":

- Replace management structure based on work type and give authority to "area managers" who are closer to the work.
- Have state workers overseeing the project not "micromanage" but set broad cost and schedule goals and monitor to see that they are met.
- Monitor use of subcontractors and add-ons for fraud, waste and abuse.
- Set a reasonable budget and time schedule and use that plan to "drive" the project toward intermediate goals.
- Improve reporting and communication within the project, training employees to determine what information is necessary and what is superfluous.
- Say "no" to requests for alterations that add cost. Eliminate or at least limit change orders that drive costs up.
- Develop new job descriptions for state workers.
- Give design contractors realistic deadlines.
- Repeat the cost-containment program begun in 1994. Objective is to reduce costs, not just prevent them from rising.
- Use public information office to increase positive articles.

Psst! Quick, lock the barn, the horse is gone!

People Movers

Curtis Davis, Central Artery/Tunnel director of urban design, to John Hancock Development.
Joe Feiner, EG & G Dynatrend, to MASCO.
John Willey, VHB, to Stone & Webster.
Robert Ciolek, Boston's chief operating officer, to Mass. Health & Educational Facilities Authority.
Ellen Pinkus, formerly of the BRA and Inspectional Services, to Alice Boelter & Associates.
Jim Gast, Central Artery/Tunnel (CA/T), to TAMS Consultants.
John Folcarelli, former MBTA general manager's chief of staff, to Middlesex Corp.
Peter Shields, Bechtel/Parsons Brinckerhoff (CA/T), to The Beacon Cos.
Veronika Thiebach, Conservation Law Foundation, to Florida.
George Holland, MBTA Construction, retired.
Terry Smith, Mass. Highway Dept., to MassPike, head traffic engineer

The Massachusetts Rideshare Regulation, on the books since 1979 but never enforced, has been revived. The 1996 Ridesharing Update requires companies with at least 250 employees in one facility to take steps to reduce drive-alone trips by 25 percent. Employers must show that they are trying to get employees to use transit, carpool, walk, and bike instead of driving alone. For most, there is no penalty for non-compliance. Call Susan Lyon at the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for details (617) 556-1101.

1 The New England Aquarium has issued a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) on its expansion project (see Nov.-Dec. 1994 issue of The Boston Informer). Sec. of Environmental Affairs Trudy Coxe has approved the DEIR in her MEPA certificate of Nov. 16, 1995, generally ignoring the comments of abutters and organizations such as The Boston Harbor Association. Commenters objected to the proposed covering of 50,000 s.f. of water to provide a building platform for an auditorium. Next steps include the Final EIR and applying for a Chapter 91 waterways application. Copies of the DEIR can be obtained from Earth Tech at 508-371-4000.

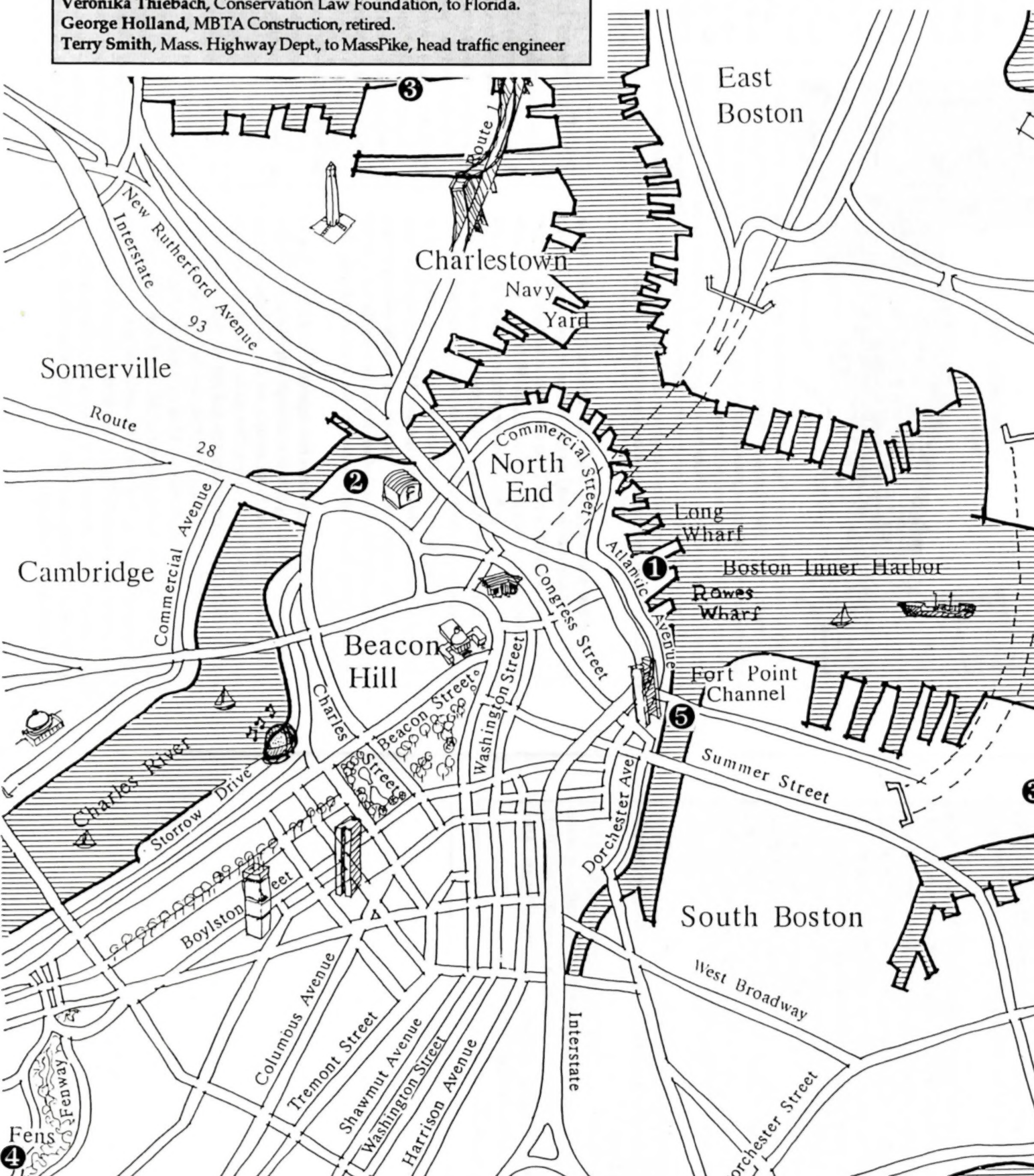
2 The legislature and Gov. Weld have approved construction of a \$48 million, 600-cell pre-trial lock-up for Boston. It will contain a courtroom, drug-testing lab, kitchen and medical/detox area.

One suggested site is Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital on Nashua Street, which would help resolve the dispute over the taking of the hospital by the Central Artery/Tunnel project. Spaulding's owner, Mass. General Hospital, wants it to be taken by the CA/T project so the hospital won't be surrounded by artery construction. The CA/T project maintains it doesn't need to take the building for the project.

3 The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has approved a Massport and U. S. Army Corps of Engineers plan for dredging three areas of Boston Harbor to about a depth of 40 feet. The dredging will be done in the ship channel between Deer Island and Long Island; portions of the Chelsea and Mystic rivers; and the Conley Terminal in South Boston. Contaminated sediments will be disposed of by a new method of burying and capping them in pits under the shipping channel. The dredging is expected to be completed in about two years.

4 The developers of **The Fenway**, the \$110 million retail development proposed for the former Sears building on Park Drive, may be joining the crowd of developers planning multi-screen movie theaters. New England Development had hoped to break ground in the summer of 1995, but the struggling project has lost two major tenants and is now looking at other retail tenants along with the movie theater tenant. The project also includes a 60,000 s.f. supermarket and a 1,966-space parking garage.

5 **News Flash!!** The **New Northern Avenue Bridge** is finally open to eastbound traffic. First planned to be open in summer of 1994 after 20 years of "planning," the bridge will ease traffic flow into South Boston for vehicles on Atlantic Avenue. Drivers exiting the Central Artery will still have to use the old Northern Avenue Bridge.

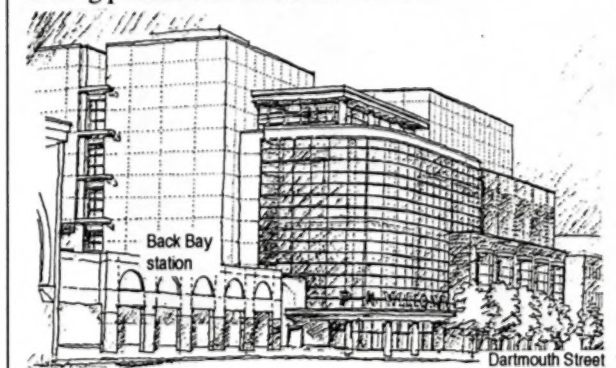


Academia in limelight in transportation issues:

Oh, what a tangled web...Forgotten by now, then-Senate President **Billy Bulger** pushed to block a \$110 million plan to accommodate double-stacked freight train cars as part of the Seaport revitalization proposed by Gov. Weld. A BIG booster of Bulger's on this issue was **Boston University President John Silber** whose coveted Allston Conrail Yard would have been improved for freight, not B. U., expansion, with the funding. The fate of the Allston Yard has been an issue for years, certainly during **Jim Carlin's** tenure as Sec. of Transportation in the early 1980s.

Now, as fate would have it, these three people are together as leaders in the Commonwealth's academic arena, Silber as chair of the Board of Education and Training; Bulger, president of UMass; and Carlin, chair of the Higher Education Coordinating Council. All three have been powerful forces in shaping the region's transportation systems in the past and are now turning their sights toward shaping thought processes. Perhaps there are some Roads Scholarships ahead.

The proposed **Copley Pavilion cinema complex** next to the Back Bay/South End station is undergoing change. The project would be built over the existing garage opposite the Southwest Corridor park. A 30-member citizens advisory committee (CAC) has been working with the developer, Boylston Properties, since September to lessen potential impacts and improve the proposed project. Changes include eliminating the 3-D IMAX theater and reducing the height from 147 feet to 107 feet. The traffic study prepared for the City stated that project-generated traffic would be manageable, because most cinema traffic comes on Friday and Saturday night, not during peak commuter hours, and over 70 percent of movie-goers would walk, bike or take transit. The IMAX was dropped because it was the highest element and it was felt that it might attract many more out-of-town driving patrons than traditional cinemas.



The MBTA plans to repair the deteriorated **Clarendon Street bus turnaround at Back Bay/South End station** in 1996. Plans to rebuild the deck, waterproof, and strengthen and increase lighting were presented at recent public meetings. Citing the original urban design considerations for the Clarendon Plaza busway which included "the importance of Clarendon Street as a pedestrian and vehicular entrance," residents expressed concerns about the lack of attention to pedestrians and generally user-unfriendly design. The plans include making the center island smaller, continuing to accommodate MBTA employee parking and planting a small number of low evergreen shrubs next to the parked cars.

The project is being done in part to continue to accommodate the temporary Route 39 bus. The upgrade is designed for the "next 100 years," giving new meaning to the word temporary. The Route 39 is operating until streetcar service to the Arborway in Jamaica Plain is restored. Service was discontinued in 1985. Although the MBTA hopes to start construction of the turnaround in March, none of the approximately \$2.5 million in funding has been allocated. Comments may be addressed to William Quinlan, MBTA, at 222-3425.

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Plans for revitalizing City Hall Plaza focus on creating "lovable, sacred spaces," "defining the edges of the space" and creating "placemakers which act as meeting points." This has led planners to the conclusion that Scollay Square should be brought back. "Placemakers" such as the Old Howard will be recreated for those "active uses" so desperately sought.

Boston Informer Psychic Predicts for '96...

- **An accounting error** will be found in Big Dig records and will result in a huge credit for the Central Artery/Tunnel project. The actual cost of construction, administration, mitigation and litigation, is now pegged at \$5.5 billion. The state will commit the "surplus" funds to support impacted neighborhoods.
- **South Shore motorcycle sales** will increase by 200 percent as Massachusetts drivers, unwilling to drive with others in the Southeast Expressway carpool lane, flock to motorcycles which are permitted.
- **MBTA will be privatized** and sell the Blue Line to the Pyramid Companies who are planning the first linear tunnel mall from Aquarium to Maverick Square. The New England Aquarium had also bid on the Blue Line tunnel to use as a holding tank for its larger species and to line up patrons going to the new facility.
- **Ted Williams Tunnel opens to all traffic** and projections come true showing that the Sumner and Callahan tunnels are needed for local use only.
- **A new floating domed stadium/megaplex** will be proposed for the Inner Harbor and will be towable to other cities if franchises are lost.
- **MBTA proposes giving each resident** in the Washington Street corridor a free electric car, saying it would provide better, more cost-effective transportation than any of the transit options studied in the last 19 years.

Former Registry Building at Ruggles Center Becomes State Smoking Center

- In a move showing its commitment to the revitalization of the Ruggles station area in Roxbury, the Governor announced that the Ruggles Registry building, closed after workers became sick with respiratory problems, would be transformed into state offices for smoking employees only. Approximately 100 smoke-filled, ashtray-strewn, tobacco-stained offices are scheduled to be created in the former Registry, which will be renamed the Edward R. Murrow State Smoking Center. The developers of Ruggles Center are reported to be thrilled at the Governor's decision, because repairs to the structure can now be done in a more cost-effective and phased manner.

Creation of the new smoking center is expected to lessen pressure on the state to move back to Ruggles when costly repairs are completed and once again close the Nashua Street Registry and relocate employees. The old Registry was pressed into service again in July 1995 when the Dept. of Public Health ordered the Ruggles building vacated. Surprisingly, when the Nashua Street building was re-occupied, 12 employees were discovered in their cubicles. Apparently, they had never moved to Ruggles and just kept "showing up" every day.

The Governor also stated that this move makes good sense, because it fits well with his plans to abolish most of the functions performed by the Registry. He explained that maintaining the Registry deep in the heart of Central Artery construction would probably result in tremendous attrition of employees, because many would be lost trying to negotiate the detours and construction barriers on their way to work. This would result in a kinder, gentler reduction in force than outright layoffs. Further, the Nashua Street building will ultimately be demolished during Central Artery construction, and the Governor said that the state will save significant money in moving costs by simply leaving the obsolete records, equipment and supplies in the building and let the Central Artery demolition crew take care of it.

The Edward R. Murrow State Smoking Center is expected to open in July 1996.

What They're Saying!

"The shelf tax is just an insurance policy against what I call Central Artery-type behavior."

Rep. Thomas Finneran on a convention center bill regarding possible cost overruns.

"I wish I could tell you that the plan is being driven by pedestrian needs, but a lot has to do with traffic..."

Karl Haglund, MDC project manager for the new Charles River Basin planning.

"With a little faith, it will all fall apart."

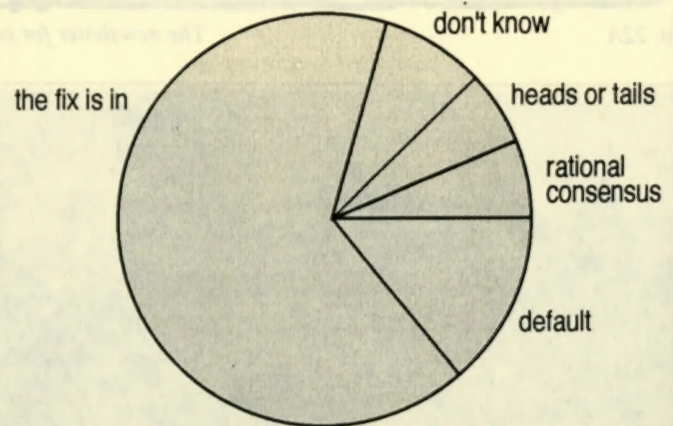
Pixie Palladino, East Boston.

"I truly don't know or understand what's going on."

Robert Kraft, N. E. Patriots owner, about Megaplex situation.

Boston Informer exclusive poll results!

"How do you think the approvals process works?"



Now Playing at a Theater Near You!

Clueless—Your favorite agency/person/group in action
 Waterworld—New England Aquarium Expansion Plans
 Waiting to Exhale—MBTA staff at budget time
 Get Shorty—The saga of the UMass President Search Committee
 Money Train—Story of planning and design effort for North-South Rail Link
 Now & Then—Riveting tale of CA/T public affairs office efforts
 While You Were Sleeping—Logan Airport shut-down allows neighbors to sleep;
 listen for Runway 14/32 when the wind shifts
 Casino—Governor Weld's legacy to Massachusetts
 Nine Months—Gestation period for MBTA Urban Ring Request for Proposals

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New ways to cross Dartmouth Street at Back Bay station

You were asking...

Q. Is there a connection between Hanscom Field losing money, Massport wanting to sell it, and several airlines wanting to start service there?
A. Yes.

Q. What is the status of the Surface Transportation Action Forum (STAF) looking at the streets above the depressed Central Artery?

A. The last meeting of "STAF I" was held Dec. 14, and a new report outlining the group's findings is available from the Boston Transportation Department. "STAF II" will focus on the "ends," Dewey Square and the Bulfinch Triangle. Call Vineet Gupta at BTB, 635-2756, for the report or to be notified of upcoming meetings.

Q. About last month's question on why South Station Transportation Center (SSTC) is too small, isn't it true that BRA's plans for air rights development had something to do with scaling back the bus terminal?

A. Yes. The BRA, even as late as 1989/90, still believed it could pull off a massive development on the air rights over the tracks. The BRA actually considered modifying the piles at the north end of the rail yard to accommodate a bigger development, but lack of decision by the BRA "forced" the MBTA to go forward with what it could of the SSTC, leaving over 200 feet open between the station and the SSTC.

Q. What caused the building on the Fort Point Channel, 303 Congress St., to sink and eventually have to be torn down?

A. The 11-year-old, six-story building was sinking because the concrete piles supporting the building were flawed. The piles failed due to a chemical reaction between seawater, containing magnesium, and tricalcium aluminate in the cement.

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